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The President's Daily Brief

4 May 1971

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

4 May 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On *Page 1*, we comment on Ulbricht's decision to step down as first secretary of the East German Communist Party.

Cambodia's National Assembly is considering the latest proposal to have Sirik Matak run the government under Lon Nol's titular leadership, a formula which is likely to offer only an interim political solution. *(Page 2)*

Some elements of the North Vietnamese 316th Division have moved northward from the Laotian irregular complex southwest of the Plaine des Jarres. *(Page 3)*

Photography shows little new Chinese construction on roads in northwest Laos during the current dry season. *(Page 4)*

[redacted] North 50X1
Korea [redacted] 50X1
[redacted] *(Page 5)* 50X1

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EAST GERMANY

There is no evidence that Ulbricht was forced to step down as first secretary of the East German Communist Party. Ulbricht, now 77, is being replaced as party leader by 58-year-old Erich Honecker, but is keeping his position as chief of state and assuming a new honorary post as party "chairman."

Policy problems, as well as age and health, were almost certainly a factor in Ulbricht's decision. Last December, he was outvoted on economic policy when the pursuit of overambitious plans led the country into serious economic difficulties. He has also at times been at odds with his allies over how to respond to the pressures of Bonn's Ostpolitik.

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Honecker is personally known to most of the present Soviet leaders and received special attention from them at the recent Soviet party congress. As heir-apparent to Ulbricht for the past ten years, he is widely considered to be as dogmatic as his mentor. He has been running the party's routine operations for some years and is unlikely to encounter any serious domestic opposition. In foreign policy, Honecker is likely to stress continuity and to avoid arousing expectations of change which could unsettle the domestic political situation. Most West German leaders, including Brandt, have long regarded Honecker as offering little improvement over Ulbricht regarding the prospects for their stalemated Ostpolitik.

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CAMBODIA

The latest formula for breaking the political stalemate apparently is now before the National Assembly for approval. Under the plan, [redacted] Lon Nol would continue as nominal prime minister while Sirik Matak, serving as his "delegate," would discharge most of the responsibilities of prime minister. 50X1

The proposal, if accepted, would represent a return to essentially the same situation that prevailed before Lon Nol's resignation. At that time the disturbing prospects of running a country with a physically disabled prime minister and an inadequately supported deputy contributed to the pressure for Lon Nol's resignation and the subsequent political impasse that has now lasted two weeks. Although the new arrangement might be acceptable as an interim measure, it does not come to grips with the fundamental cleavages in the political situation.

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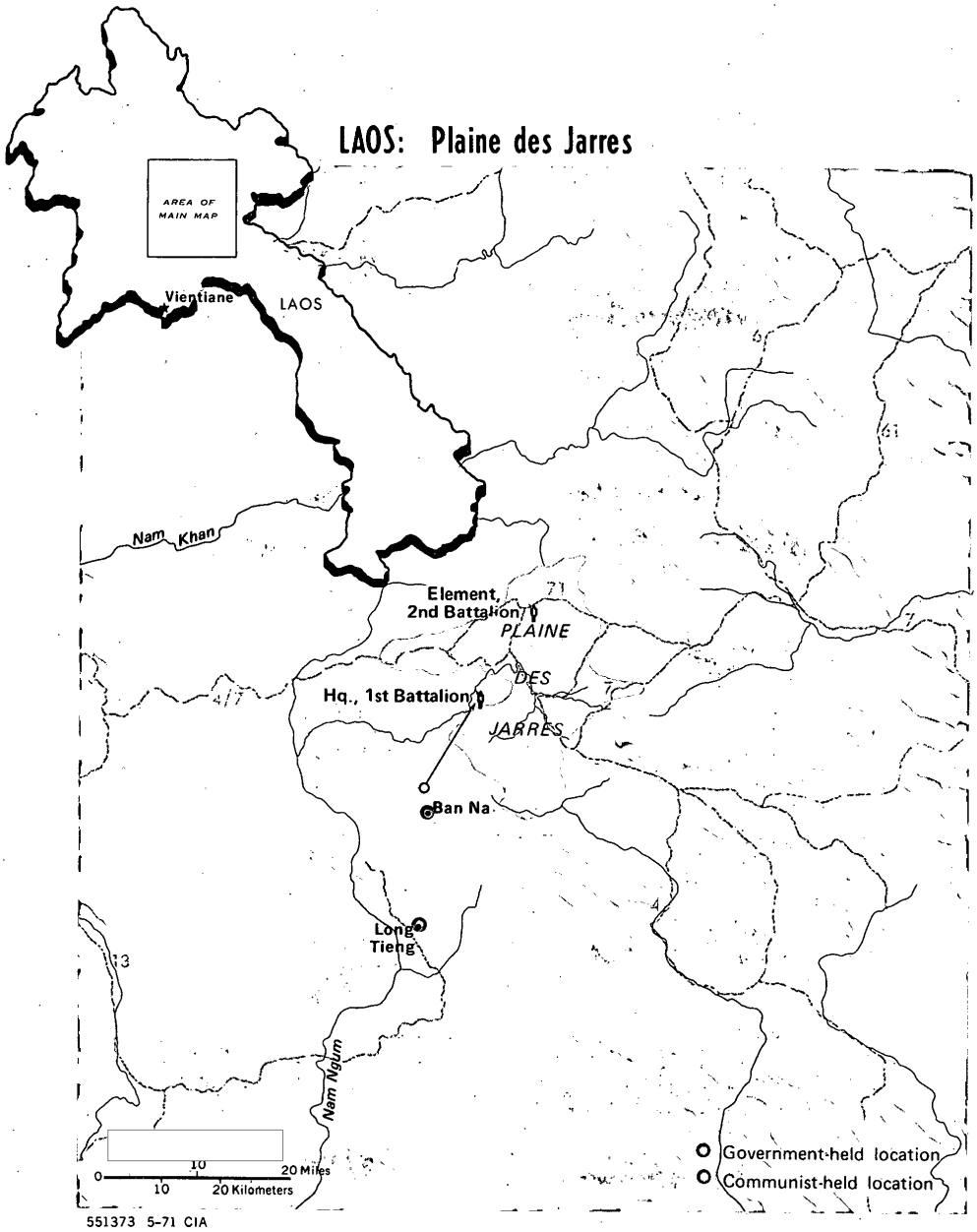

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LAOS

[redacted] two battalions of the 174th Regiment of the North Vietnamese 316th Division have moved northward away from the Ban Na area near Long Tieng. There is also tenuous evidence that the regiment's third battalion may be departing the Ban Na area. 50X1

The heavy casualties these units have suffered appear to be one reason for their withdrawal. Some elements of the 174th have been way under strength for weeks, [redacted] *It is not clear yet whether these units will be recommitted to the Ban Na area after a short period of refitting or if they are withdrawing for the rainy season.* [redacted] 50X1 50X1

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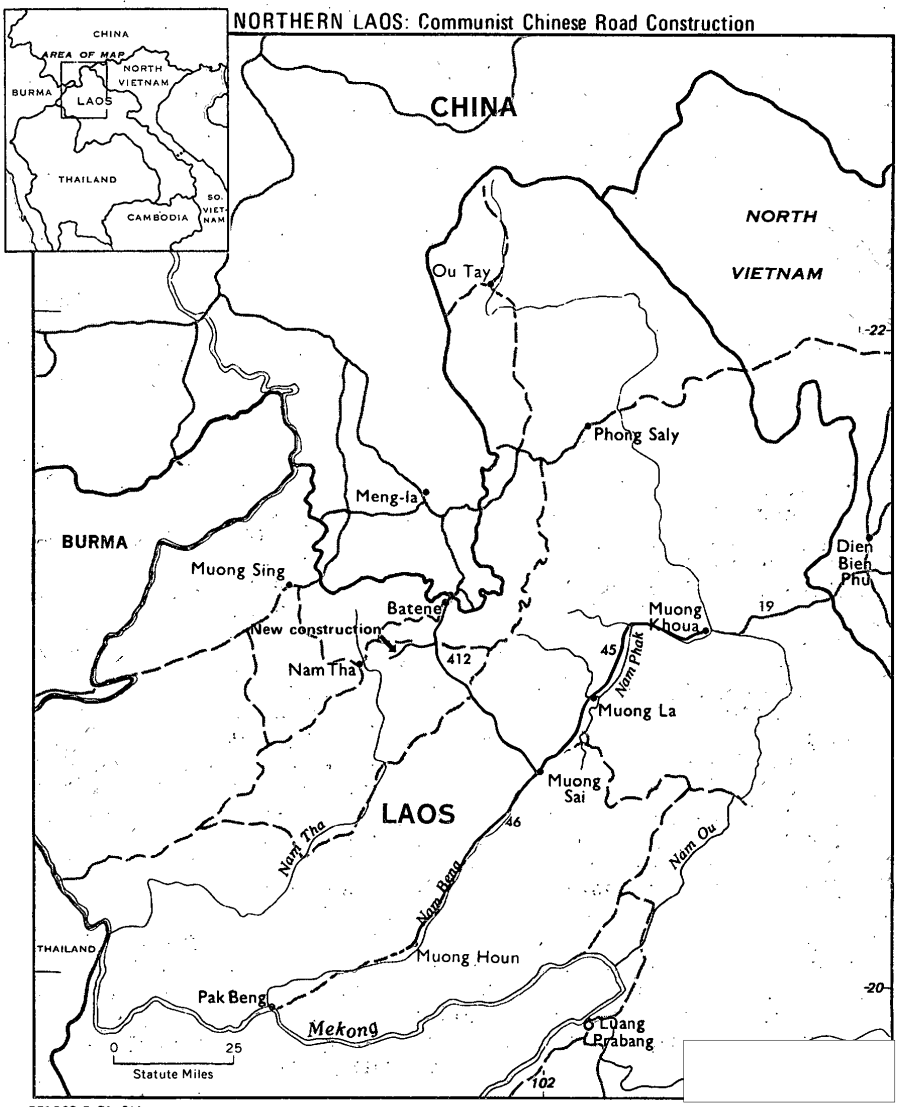
NORTHERN LAOS: Communist Chinese Road Construction



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COMMUNIST CHINA - LAOS

Recent photography shows that Chinese road builders in northwest Laos have not extended Route 46 southwest beyond its present terminus at Muong Houn during the current dry season. There are, moreover, no indications of an effort to push farther south toward the Mekong River during the rainy season.

Various road improvements are under way on Route 45, the other branch northeast from Muong Sai, including a number of small bridges and culverts on the northern half of this route.

> *We have anticipated that a large bridge or ferry across the Nam Ou River would be constructed to connect Route 45 with Route 19 from North Vietnam, but this has not yet begun.*

During April the Chinese constructed some three miles of new motorable road and there are nearly four miles of survey traces extending southwest from Route 412 along the China border toward Nam Tha. It is unclear whether or not this work will continue into the rainy season.

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USSR-KOREA

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NOTE

Philippines: In Manila, an indignation rally has been scheduled for Friday as the result of the deaths of four May Day demonstrators and injuries to many more at the hands of untrained antiriot forces. Any street violence could prompt President Marcos to impose martial law, a step that would further harden the battle lines between the government and student and labor elements.

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